

US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY



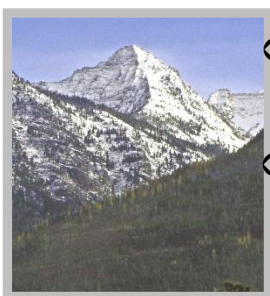
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas

Issue Date: 8:00 AM, Tuesday, March 27, 2012
Valid Until: Midnight, Tuesday, March 27, 2012
Next Update: Friday, March 30, 2012
Issued by: Tony Willits

This advisory is a product of the US Forest Service, US Dept. of Agriculture. Along with other snow and avalanche information, it is originally posted at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead>. An audio summary is available via telephone at 406-257-8402

All Mountain Ranges



7,500 ft. elevation



5,000 ft.



Avalanche Danger Summary

3 - Considerable : 4,500 to 7,500 ft. elevation,
During periods of thaw on steep, open slopes especially on solar aspects and run outs beneath cornice overhangs

2 - Moderate : 4,500 to 7,500 ft. elevation,
When substantial below freezing temperatures have consolidated surface snow pack

Avalanche Danger Trend

Remain at current levels through Thursday

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION



All Mountain Ranges – 4,500 to 7,500 ft. elevation

Danger Level	3 - CONSIDERABLE
Confidence	Fair
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dangerous avalanche conditions • Careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding, and conservative decision-making essential
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural avalanche possible • Human triggered avalanches likely
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small avalanches in many areas • Larger avalanches in specific areas • Very large avalanches in isolated areas

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges – 4,500 to 7,500 ft. elevation

Danger Level	2 - MODERATE
Confidence	Fair
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies, Evaluate snow and terrain carefully
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural avalanche unlikely• Human triggered avalanches possible
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small avalanches in specific areas• Larger avalanches in isolated areas

Because of the general nature of this advisory message, each backcountry party will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations. This advisory best describes conditions at the time of its issuance. As time passes avalanche and snow conditions may change, sometimes quite rapidly. Elevation and geographic distinctions used are approximate and transition zones between hazards exist.

Recent Mountain Weather

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The region transitioned from last weeks' storm cycle with lots of new snow, wind, and colder temps, into a warm air mass that brought warm temps by Sunday.
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No significant gains in snow water equivalent since Friday.
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daytime temperatures have been above freezing since Sunday AM, with nighttime temps dipping below freezing for short durations.
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Winds were light since Sunday.

Field Observation Locations

Monday, 3-26-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blue Mountain in the Purcells, 7 air miles northeast of Libby• Noisy Basin's NE of Bigfork• Patrol Ridge west of Challenge Cabin and the Skyland Road
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Observer Report Locations

Sunday, 3-25-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• See GCAC web site for some info.
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Avalanches Observed

- No slab avalanche activity, although point releases were abundant.

Instability Concern / Avalanche Problem	Level of Concern	Most★★★ Less★★ Least ★		
New Storm or Near Surface Snow		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surface snow instability due to warm temperatures resulting in roller ball activity and point releases. 		
Wind Loading		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 		
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decomposing depth hoar and/or facets within 20 to 30 cms of the ground surface remain a concern but are bridged from above by pencil hard layers. This persistent weak layer will be tested with stress from rain or an artificial trigger. 		
Spring Wet Snow or Melt-Freeze	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warm temperatures and rising freezing levels have resulted in surface snow instability. This period of thaw is potentially hazardous on steep open terrain. Stress tests were resulting in failures over melt freeze crusts. ECTN from the Noisy or Blue sites but the Patrol Ridge obs had an ECTP (hard) on the upper most melt freeze crust. This obs was at 7100' elevation. 		
Rain-on-Snow	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rising freezing levels could result in rain on snow in the next few days. 		
Loose Snow				
Other Concerns	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With warm temperatures avoid areas with large cornice overhangs below steep run outs. 		

Weather Forecast

[Current NWS Backcountry Forecast](#)

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Another system with high amounts of moisture will arrive within Northwest Montana. Tuesday will be a drier and warmer day with snow levels rising to above pass levels. The next storm system will be moving into the Northern Rockies beginning Wednesday morning and afternoon. Snow levels will remain fairly high around 5000 feet. The bulk of the precipitation is expected to fall in the Clearwater Mountains of North Central Idaho and along Idaho/Montana Border.
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 to 14 inches of snow accumulation is possible by Thursday.
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daytime temps will be into the 40's through Thursday.
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light (1-16 mi/h) SW winds.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Avalanche Outlook

Trend	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avalanche hazard will remain at current levels through Thursday.
Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid travel on steep open terrain during periods of thaw.
Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>ALWAYS carry and know how to use your avalanche safety equipment</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>Transceiver</i>○ <i>Probe</i>○ <i>Shovel</i>• <i>Watch for any rapid changes in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts</i>• <i>Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on any slope that has the potential to avalanche</i>